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Testimony to House Judiciary and House Ways and Means on
Senate 2820 7/17/20

July 16, 2020

Dear House Judiciary Chair Claire Cronin and House Ways and Means Chair Aaron Michlewitz and Committee Members,

I am the Reverend Judith K. Hanlon senior pastor at Hadwen Park Congregational Church in Worcester Massachusetts. Please, please pass this bill.

I

it is my belief that the history of policing has built a system that acts more military than protective. And, I believe that after the Emancipation Act, police were a part of the system that continued to enslave black people by rounding them up for prison for no reason and creating the work force that slavery was intended to eradicate.

I think it is very hard for even the very best police officers to protect and serve rather than catch and jail.

Sadly, I can support my opinion. Our church houses a ministry called the LGBT Asylum ministry. Thus, for 11 years, our church has been blessed to be multi-racial, multi-cultural and intergenerational. When some of our young black asylum seekers began to tell me how many times they had been stopped for traffic violations (or no reason) I couldn't believe it. One of our ministers, Al Green who is a black man from Jamaica and a graduate of Worcester Poly Tech as a civil engineer, has been stopped many times. One of the times, he was asked repeatedly if the car was his. I have never ever, when young or now as an older person, been asked if the car was mine. Al gave him the registration and license and the police officer continued to ask if this was his care. Al was so surprised because the car was nothing that he would have chosen to drive except that he was a student and struggling to both work and complete his degree. The cop did not arrest him but he was left to shamed with the assumption of poverty and crime aimed at him.

One of our young Ugandan men was picked up by State Police. He was not cited for any grievance, but they wanted to see his driver's license. He was driving, as is legal, on his Ugandan license. He was unable to get a license here because he did not yet, have a social security number. The law offers immigrants one year to drive on their license from their home country. I found him distraught and frightened. I met him at the towing company where his car was. I told

them that his license was valid. They didn't care, of course. Told me to talk to the State Police. They would not accept my call. The only way for him to get his car was for me to pay \$200.00 out of my pocket. If I didn't, the cost would increase daily. I paid it. Michael went to court and of course, the State Police were wrong! I was never able to receive my \$200. There is no question that Michael was racial profiled. They refused to listen to him and simply took him in! Who were they serving and protecting?

A gentleman from Uganda who was a doctor there, was stopped 6 times in two months. I don't think anyone who hasn't worked with these amazingly courageous people understand how traumatizing it is to be targeted. One man said to me, "Pastor Judy, in Uganda, I was tortured and beaten by the police because I was gay; in the USA, I fear being tortured and beaten by the police (even killed) because I am black."

Another young man pulled over on Main Street in Worcester at about 11pm, because his mom from Uganda called him. He was arrested and accused of prostitution. He is gay! He begged the office to look at his phone and see his mother's number to prove that he was talking to his mom. He was shamed and the police refused to listen to him. He was black, in a neighborhood where prostitution was happening, but the police officer refused to simply look at his phone.

I could go on and on. We have had black folks speak in church since the death of George Floyd. We have heard from a black police officer who left the force due to racist slurs and pressure from other police officers in the Worcester police department. From them, he was called the "N" word daily!

Please, please reform. I do not believe that we can simply have some training packets and tell racist cops to follow the rules. We need a re-do on what it is to be a police officer and we need a re-do on who we hire.

All that being said, I would not want to be a police officer today. I believe that reform will help good police officers who wish to do a good job while working under archaic and abusive guidelines.

I would be glad if this law is passed. I hope that many more will be coming in the future that will protect my good and beautiful parishioners; God's children who were made wonderfully by the God of diversity.

With respect and hope.

The Reverend Judith K. Hanlon